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THE NIBELUNGEN LEGEND AND ITS HISTORICAL BASIS¹

The Legend of the Nibelungen, dealing with the heroic age of that group of nations called Teutonic, Germanic, or Gothonic, is to these races what the Homeric poems are to the Greeks. Though less perfect than they in structure, still the legend is the most venerable common treasure of ancient Germanic poetry.

If we include the latest additions to the compact Nibelungen block, the legend contains elements from about 350 A.D. to about 1000 A. D. The first great epic climax is reached in 436 with the defeat and death of the Burgundian king Gunther in the battle against the Huns, before the close of the Roman epoch, and before the culmination of the great migration age. The second and more dramatic climax is reached in 575, when the Franconian king Sigbert was slain by the brother of king Gunthram of Burgundy, a murder later attributed to Queen Brunhild. As a postlude, in 630 comes the defeat of king Dagbert by king Samo's heathen Slavs.

Sung for ages, the legend finally died out on the lips of the people. When the German composer Wagner revived it in the 19th Century, young Sigfrid of the Nibelungen legend became a sort of modern German national hero, and the original history of the legend became the subject of animated discussions among German scholars.

No one denies that the chief persons in the second act of the drama are historical; that was well known even in the earlier part of the Middle Ages. Godfred di Viterbo in the 12th century says: "It is not true that Dietrich von Bern and Ermanic and Attila were contemporaries, as it is related." It was rather the overture and the first act which caused the

¹ The ingeniously elaborated theory concerning the historical basis of the *Nibelungenlegend* which Dr. Schütte presents in this paper was suggested first by Gottsched (*De temporibus Teutonicorum vatum mythicis* 1752, p. x) and again advanced in the 19th century by A. Giesebrecht (von der Hagen's *Germania*, 1837; II, 237 ff.) without receiving, however, the general approval of scholars. A careful perusal of the passages quoted from Gregory of Tours' *Historia Francorum* and from Fredegar's *Chronicle* will enable the reader to judge for himself whether the author's interpretations and deductions are warranted and the coincidence of certain names and situations is more than merely accidental.—Editor.

dispute. They seemed totally obscure and mere fancy. The hoard-guarding fire-dragon, the Valkyrie Brynhild awakened from magic sleep by the hero of divine origin, the visitation of the curse of the hoard upon him,—these were matters of debate.

The first explorers of the Nibelungen story could see nothing historical in all this. To them, Sigfrid was a sun-hero awakening the sleeping day (Brynhild), and at sunset he was overcome by the Nibelungs, the demons of mist and night. (German Nebel=mist.) This was largely supported by the success of Wagner's Nibelungen-Ring, for the whole construction fitted in well with the tendency toward reviving the ancient Gothic mythology as a sort of modern German national religion.² Kroll even went so far as to attempt to establish in real earnest "Wodanism," the cult of Wodan.

Certainly some elements of the Nibelungen legend have assumed a more or less mythical form, especially in the northern countries where heathendom survived much longer than in Germany; and where mythical metaphors became forever a predominating feature of the poetical language. Such elements are, for example, the "king of the dwarfs," Alberich (cf. the old Celtic god, Mars Albiorix) and the tale of the young hero who awakens a sleeping princess. This latter is preserved in Germany as a separate fairy tale, the famous story of *Dornröschen*.

Again, an entire stratum of mythical figures is represented by the ancestors of the same young hero, the family of Völsungs in the Scandinavian version. The original ancestor, Sigi, is obviously a hypostasis of Odin, who was known also as Sigfadir and Sigtyr, the god of victory, and whose principal sanctuary in Sweden, according to the *Snorra Edda*, was Sigtuna, "the town of Sig." Sigi's grandson Sigmund, according to Norwegian folk-lore, is the leader of the Asgaardrei.³

In the Norwegian catalogue of heroes fighting at Bravellir, Sigmund is localised at the Odinic sanctuary, Sigtuna. His sister and wife, Signy, marries Siggeir, the slayer of Sigmund's

²Dr. Schütte here overrates the influence of Wagner's music-drama. What kept the mythological interpretation of the legend really alive was the predominance of the Lachmann-Müllenhoff school of philologists with whom it had become a fixed dogma.—Editor.

³ See Ross, *Norsk Ordbog*, art. *Sigmund*.

father, and takes revenge upon him, devoting herself finally to a ritual suttee. She seems to symbolize the Odinic priestess Frigg, who appears in the myths of Odin as his and his rival's wife alternately.⁴

We do not deny then the existence of mythical elements in the legend. However, such elements do not sufficiently account for all names, characters, and actions in the drama, and we must search for a more satisfactory explanation of numerous points still remaining obscure. August Giesebrecht, a German scholar, was the first who dared to identify the so-called mythical pair Sigfrid and Brynhild with the historical correspondence, King Sigbert and Queen Brunhild from the 6th Century.⁵ We have advocated the same view elsewhere,⁶ and it will be the aim of this essay to illustrate the chronological layers of the Nibelung legend, pointing out how important historical epochs are accompanied by corresponding chapters in the epic.

The Nibelungen legend is a gigantic mass of strata built up from the fourth to the eleventh century. The single layers are sometimes preserved in their historical order, but equally often they are found thrown pell-mell. The main features of this epical succession, however, are as follows:

HISTORY	LEGEND (OVERTURE AND FIRST ACT)
436 1. Gunther of Burgundy succumbs to A(g)etius.	Helm-Gunnar of God-thiod is killed by Agnar before the magic sleep of Brynhild. (<i>Edda</i>)
c. 370 2. Gibica of Burgundy is the predecessor of Godomar, Gunthar, Gislahar.	Gibeche of Burgundy is the father or remote kinsman of Gunther, Giselher, Gottormr. (<i>German legend, Edda.</i>)
507-509 3a. The Gothic king Alaric loses most of his Gallic dominion to the Franconian conqueror Chlodwig, Sigbert's ancestor.	The king of dwarfs, Alberich, vainly tries to defend the Nibelungen hoard against the Franconian prince Sigfrid. (<i>Nibelungenlied.</i>)

⁴ Cf. *Ynglinga Saga*, ch. 3; also Saxo's account of Othinus and Mith-Othinus, I, 43. Cf. also the corresponding rôle of Frey's priestess (wife) in the tale of Gunnar Helming's adventures, *Flateyjarbók*, II, 337. See also our article *Gudeðraebning* in the Swedish periodical *Samlaren*, 1915, p. 30; and in the Danish *Tilskueren*, 1916, p. 329.

⁵ Von der Hagen's *Germania*, 1837.

⁶ *Arkiv för nordisk filologi*, 1907, p. 1, ff.; with compendious literary references.

- b. The Goths are forced to pay a 'wergeld' by covering a Franconian horseman with gold up to the tip of his lance. The Gods are forced to pay a wergeld by covering an otter-skin, placed upright, with gold, including the tip of its whiskers.
- 509 4. Farro and Ragnahar are slain in punishment for their bestial voracity. Fafnir shows avarice and voracity, and he and his equally covetous brother Regin are slain in punishment. (*Edda*)
- c. 516. 5. Sigismund's second wife causes the death of her stepson Sigeric during a feast. Sigismund's second wife murders her stepson Sinfjötla during a feast. (*Edda*)
- 523 6. Sigismund is killed before the birth of Sigbert II. Sigismund is killed before the birth of Sigurd. (*Völsungasaga*)
- c. 565 7. Sigbert II, king of Rhenish Franconia, repels an attack of Danes and Saxons. Gunthram of Burgundy is passive. Sigfrid, king of Rhenish Franconia, repels an attack of Danes and Saxons. Gunther of Burgundy is passive. (*Nibelungenlied*, *Nornagests Thattr*)
- 436 8a. Gunthar of Burgundy is conquered by the Huns. Attila remains passive. Gunther of Burgundy is conquered by the Huns. Attila remains passive. (*Rosengarten*, *Biterolf*)
566. b. Sigbert proposes to Brunhild of Ispania, daughter of Athanagild, a king of the Baldung dynasty, and wins her. Gunthram's brother marries Brunhild's sister. Sigfrid-Sigurd proposes to Brynhild of Isenland, daughter of Atle, a king of the Budlung dynasty, and wins her for Gunther-Gunnar. Sigfrid-Sigurd marries Gunther-Gunnar's sister. (*Nibelungenlied*, *Edda*)
- 567 9. Brunhild's sister is repudiated in favor of a rival. A violent conflict breaks out between Brunhild and her sister's rival. Brynhild is forgotten by Sigurd, who marries another princess. (*Edda*) A violent conflict breaks out between Brynhild and her rival.
10. Brunhild plots against Sigbert (according to the calumnies of her foes.) Brynhild plots against the life of Sigfrid-Sigurd. (*Nibelungenlied*, *Edda*)
- 572 11a. The Hagan of the Huns, (i.e., the Chakan or prince of the Avars) conquers Sigbert. Among the Huns lives in his childhood as hostage, the prince, Hagen of Tronje (or Troneck). He murders Sigfrid ten years after the marriage of the latter. (*Nibelungenlied*) Si-
- 575 11b. King Hagan of Tournay (or Doornik) murders Sigbert about ten years after the marriage of the latter.

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| <p>575 11c. Sigbert II is murdered in his camp.</p> | <p>gurd is murdered in parliament (<i>Edda</i>)</p> |
| <p>509 11d. Sigbert I is murdered while hunting east of the Rhine, before Sigismund's death.</p> | <p>Sigfrid is murdered while hunting east of the Rhine, before Sigmund's death. (<i>Sigfridslied</i>, one version of <i>Nibelungenlied</i>.)</p> |
| <p>523 11e. Sigbert II's uncle is killed by the Burgundian king Godomar.</p> | <p>Sigfrid is killed by the Burgundian prince Gottormr. (<i>Edda</i>)</p> |
| <p>509-575 12. The murderer seizes Sigbert's treasures.</p> | <p>The murderer seizes Sigfrid's treasures. (<i>Nibelungenlied</i>)</p> |
| <p>587 13. Gunthram of Burgundy establishes a general reconciliation three years after the husband of Brunhild's rival has been murdered.</p> | <p>Gunther of Burgundy establishes a general reconciliation three and a half years after the husband of Brynhild's rival has been murdered. (<i>Nibelungenlied</i>)</p> |
| <p>613 14. Calumniators charge Brunhild with the murder of Sigbert and numerous other men. She is bound to a horse and dragged to death.</p> | <p>A witch charges Brynhild with the murder of Sigurd and the ruin of numerous other men. Brynhild rides to the infernal regions on a grave-horse. (<i>Edda</i>)</p> |

HISTORY

- 447 15a. The heathen king Attila proposes to the Christian Roman princess Honoria.
- 493 15b. The heathen king Chlodwig proposes to the Christian Burgundian princess Chrodhild and marries her.
- 493 16. et. sqq. Chrodhild plots against her relations, the Burgundian princes, who are charged with having murdered some of her family. She stirs up her sons.
- 436-437 17. Gunthar of Burgundy is attacked by the Huns, without the co-operation of Attila. (cf. 1 above.)
- 445 18a. Attila kills his brother Bleda.

LEGEND (SECOND ACT)

- The heathen king Attila proposes to the Christian Burgundian princess Kriemhild, and marries her. (*Nibelungenlied*)
- Kriemhild plots against her relations, the Burgundian princes, because they have murdered her husband. (*Nibelungenlied*)
- She stirs up her sons. (*Thidrekssaga*)
- Gunther of Burgundy is attacked by the Huns, without the co-operation of Attila. (*Nibelungenlied*)
- Attila's queen unintentionally causes the death of Duke Bloedelin. Dankwart kills Duke Bloedelin and numer-

630 18b. Dagbert slaughters a flock of fugitive "Huns" (Bulgares) near the frontier of Bavaria.

454 19. Attila's sons succumb to revolted Gothonic tribes near the Danube. (cf. 16 and 25 above.)

530 20. Ruin of the Gothic king Theoderic's ally, Irminfrid, king of the Thuringians, a tribe probably once subject to Attila.

512 21. Ruin of Theodric's ally, Hrodwulf (in Austria) king of the Erulian state which had been subject to Attila.

451 22. Attila and Theodmer, father of Theodric, fight in Gaul against A(g)etius and the Burgundians. *Chronicon Paschale* says, near Danube.

532 23. Burgundy is ruined by the sons of the revengeful Burgundian woman Chrodhild.

553 24. The successors of Theoderic the great are ruined.

630 25. Dagbert, king of Franconia and Burgundy, is totally defeated in eastern Germany by Samo, the great king of the heathen Slavs. Dagbert's successor is Sigbert.

453 26a. Attila dies by hemorrhage in his bed beside his young bride, Hildico. (According to later sources, murdered by her.)

26b. Gothonic tribes near the Danube revolt against his sons, kill Ellak and eject Ernak. (cf. 16 and 19 above.)

927-63 47a. Gero, Margrave of Saxony.

ous other Huns near the frontier of Bavaria. (*Nibelungenlied*)

Attila's son is killed by Hagen. (*Nibelungenlied*)

Ruin of Irnfrid, a Thuringian hero, vassal of Attila. (*Nibelungenlied*)

Ruin of Dietrich's friend Rüdiger, margrave of Pöchlarn in Austria, vassal of Attila. (*Nibelungenlied*) (Margrave Rodingeir of Bakalar in *Thidrekssaga*; *ibid.* also called Rodolf of Bakalar.)

Attila's men and Dietmar's son, Dietrich fight near the Danube against Hagen and the Burgundians. (*Nibelungenlied*)

The Burgundians are ruined by the people of the revengeful Burgundian woman Kriemhild. (*Nibelungenlied*)

Dietrich von Bern loses his men.

Dankwart, a great hero, marshal of Burgundy, succumbs in Hunland to the great king of the heathen people in the East. (*Nibelungenlied*) Gunther's successor is Sigfrid. (*Klage*)

Attila's wife, Gudrun, murders his sons Erp and Eitel, and afterward, himself. (*Edda*)

Gere, one of Gunther's men, seems to have survived the Hunnic battle. (*Nibelungenlied*)

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| <p>971-991 27b. Bishop Pilgrim of Passau and the Count Rüdiger in Austria, live after the Hunnic battle.</p> | <p>Bishop Pilgrim of Passau, a contemporary of Margrave Rüdiger of Austria, survives the Hunnic battle. (<i>Nibelungenlied</i>)</p> |
| <p>983-1002 27c. Eckewart, Margrave of Meissen.</p> | <p>Eckewart, one of Krimhild's men, seems to survive the Hunnic battle. (<i>Nibelungenlied</i>)</p> |
| <p>c. 370 28. The Gothic king Ermanric commits suicide after his defeat by the Huns.</p> | <p>The Gothic king Ermanric, son-in-law of Gudrun, dies after being wounded by her sons, the Hunnic heroes Hamde and Sörlle. (<i>Edda</i>)</p> |

It is immediately noticeable that the chronology of the second act is disturbed; in the Overture and first act, it is fairly correct, the insignificant aberrations from the historical succession of events not being sufficient to overturn the continuity of this saga of the Merovingian dynasty from the beginning to the end.

Sometimes indeed, the epical chronology may have been even more correct than we have indicated. It is not strictly necessary, for example, that Helm-Gunnar be placed, as in the legend, before his historical predecessor Gjuke (Gibeche). Certainly the latter is called "father" (ancestor, predecessor) of those Burgundian kings whose fates are described in the legend; thus some version may rightly have placed Gjuke behind the age of king Helm-Gunnar the *alter ego* of king Gunnar or Gunther.

In other cases, events standing in their correct places in one version have in other versions been confused with corresponding episodes from different ages. So, while the northern version places the birth of Sigurd (Sigfried) after the death of Sigmund, the German version makes Sigmund survive Sigfrid, having substituted the older Sigbert who was murdered in 509, and Sigismund, who did not share his fate until 523.

In certain cases, chronological facts are preserved with astonishing faithfulness, as in the ten years between Sigfrid's marriage and death, and the reconciliation effected by Gunther three years after the husband of Brunhild's rival had been murdered.

In the second act, however, the chronology is mere chaos. Leaving the first act at the year 613 we skip to 447, 493, 436-7,

630, 453, 530, 512, 451, 532, 630, 453, 991, 1002, (and in the Edda, back to 370). Only one scene continues the current from the first act; that is Dankwart's defeat by the Huns, a reflection of Dagbert's by the Slavs in 630, the fatal final catastrophe which ended Merovingian domination over Germany. With Dagbert's fall, the saga of the Merovings ends. Exactly here the chronological confusion starts. The reason is not far to seek.

The well-known tendency of legends of dynastic catastrophes to conglomerate causes an influx of epical immigrants into the Merovingian drama headed by the Burgundian king Gunther from 436 A. D. He is accompanied by his contemporary circle of Hunnic heroes, and followed by several vagrant individuals, mostly Merovingian or victims of Merovingian policy. Some elements of female intrigue are added as moving forces; but the chief content of the conglomerate remains military action.

Gunthar of Burgundy's entrance is due to his onomastic likeness to the later Meroving Gunthrain of Burgundy. This confusion accounts for the striking contrast in the Nibelungenlied, showing king Gunther in Act 1 as an unwarlike, hen-pecked husband (Gunthram), then in Act II suddenly changed to a gallant warrior (the old Gunther). The northern version preserves a reflection of the old Gunther in his right place as Helm-Gunnar, the king who is killed by Agnar before the beginning of the Merovingian drama. Also, the German poems *Rosengarten* and *Biterolf* preserve a reflection of the fact that Gunther's defeat by the Romans preceded his final ruin at the hands of the Huns, for they tell how Gunther of Burgundy is beaten in a tournament at Worms, by Dietrich of Bern and Attila's margrave Rüdiger prior to the final conflict with the Huns.

Attila himself, though he had no personal part in the Hun expedition against the Burgundians is naturally held more responsible by later ages. Thus was the Burgundian drama enriched with a series of Hunnic scenes: the murder of Bleda, 445; Attila's wooing of Princess Honoria, 447; his defeat in Gaul, 451; his wedding with Hildico, 453; his death in the bridal bed, and finally the defeat of his sons by the revolting tribes in the same year. The events of several decades were generally reduced to a space of months or weeks, and the wooing was set back to before the Burgundian defeat in 436. Such chrono-

logical alterations must be considered insignificant and a normal consequence of the epical development.

In the course of time, however, Attila's wooing became amalgamated with a later event of the same century. His proposal had not been successful, and the epical mind, not content with such a negative state of things, had sought for another famous heathen king who also had proposed to a Christian princess. One who had proposed and had been accepted was discovered in king Chlodwig, founder of the State of France, who, in 493 had married the Christian Burgundian princess Chrodhild. The details are borrowed and fitted to Attila, to the improvement of the story, and the feminine element is heightened by the historical fact that the Burgundian princess, as the wife of the heathen king, brought ruin upon her country and people.

The introduction of the Merovingian king in disguise naturally attracted other elements from Merovingian history. Hence the episode of the ruin of the Thuringian king Irminfrid in 530. The fall of Hrodwulf the Erulian in 512 was also exploited. The severe losses suffered by Dietrich of Bern probably represent the ruin of the Gothic state in Italy, after the death of Theoderic the Great, during the wars of 535-553.

Chronology is further disturbed by the placing of all events between the beginning of the Burgundian-Hunnic conflict and the entrance of Dietrich, before the death of Dankwart, i. e., the defeat of the Merovingian king Dagbert in 630. This event may, from the Merovingian point of view, be regarded as the nucleus of the entire *Nibelungomachia*. But as Dankwart is only a subordinate hero, the law of epical back-stress requires that the older Burgundian kings Gunther and Giselher with their demonic champion Hagen, survive until the tragical end of the drama. Then the surviving Burgundian prince Sigfrid, Gunther's son, reflects Dagbert's historical successor Sigbert who reigned after 638.

Toward the end, the northern version suddenly leaps back to the Gothic king Ermanric who died about 370. The German version, on the contrary introduces at the end Pilgrim, Bishop of Passau from 971 to 991, and his friend Margrave Rüdiger of Austria. This Rüdiger (instead of the Rodolf of the *Thidreks-saga*) reflects an historical Rüdiger who lived in Pilgrim's time. The Margraves Eckewart and Gero (927-963) embody the wars

of the Germans against the Slavs during the reign of the Saxon Emperors.

This bird's eye view of the Nibelung conglomerate presents its contents of good and bad chronology. The pages which follow will deal with the single chapters of the legend according to the true historical sequence.

1. THE LEGEND OF THE GOTHIC KING, ERMANRIC

The stories concerning Ermanric as related by the Gothic historian Jordanis in the 6th Century, are the first Gothic legends to survive the migration age in epic tradition.

Ermanric had founded a large Gothic state in southern Russia, the first Gothonic power of note since Marbod's Swabian empire about the beginning of our era. But the Gothic emperor succumbed to the invading Huns about 370 A. D., and according to Ammianus Marcellinus, committed suicide,—perhaps a ritual sacrifice to avert the catastrophe. This was the first notable event in the Gothonic tradition since the defeat of Boiorix, the Jutlander, and his Cimbrians by Marius in northern Italy on July 29, 101 B. C., and since the German chief Arminius defeated the Romans in the forest of Teutoburg, 9 A. D. Boiorix remained in Gothic legends of the 6th Century as Beric, the leader of the first Gothic migration from Scandinavia to Germany; but neither he nor Arminius survived the close of the migration age as epic figures.⁷ Ermanric became the first great center of an epic cycle, a predecessor of Dietrich von Bern, Attila, Charlemagne, Artus.

Jordanis relates of Ermanric that he had been deceived by one of his subjects, and in his rage had the traitor's wife Sunilda torn to pieces by wild horses. Her brothers Sarv and (H)ammi (Smock and Chemise) revenged themselves on the king, wounding him severely. He died from a slow fever caused partly by the wounds, and partly by the grief at the Hunnic invasion.

In the *Edda*, Sunilda becomes Svanhild, a niece of the Burgundian king Gunnar. Her mother, Gudrun, after killing her own husband Atle (Attila) had married king Jonakr. Svanhild was their daughter; Sörle, Hamde, and Erp, their sons. Svan-

⁷ See, however, H. I. Hanna, *Siegfried-Arminius*, *Journal of English Germanic Philology*, XIX, 439 ff.—Editor.

hild married Ermanric who, influenced by the calumnies of his evil counselor Bikke, had her trampled by wild horses. Her brothers revenged her by cutting off the king's hands and feet, though they could not kill him. Ordinary weapons were futile against them, so they were stoned to death. Hence, in the poetic language, stones are called "the harm of Jonakrs' sons (Jonakrs bura harmr).

German and Danish traditions contain the same legend without reference to the Nibelung cycle.

2. THE LEGEND OF THE BURGUNDIAN KING GUNTAR

About the year 510, king Gundbad of Burgundy had the laws of his nation codified in the *Lex Burgundionum*. The preface mentions his royal predecessors Gibica, Godomar, Gunthar, Gislahar, all of whom reappear in the Nibelung cycle. In the *Edda* the dynasty is called the Gjukungs, descendants of Gibica.

Gunthar was the most renowned member of the dynasty. His story is reported by such chroniclers⁸ of his own or the following age as Prosper Tire, Prosper Aquitanus, Idatius, and the Greeks Olymiodorus and Socrates.

From them we learn that Gunthar ruled about the middle Rhine (P.T.; 9; about Worms, capital of the epical Gunther). In 410 he and the Alanic chief Goar tried to set Jovinus, the usurper in Gaul, against the Roman Emperor (O.). About 430, the Burgundians repelled the Hunnic chieftain Uptar (Gothic* Ufta-harjis) who had attacked them with superior forces (S). However, Gunthar was totally defeated in 435-36 by the Roman governor Aëtius with his Hunnic mercenaries (P.T. and I.). Twenty thousand Burgundians fell (I), including Gunthar and his whole family (P.A.). The *Chronicon Paschale* erroneously localizes the battle near the Danube. It was "a memorable fight" (P.T.), and such Burgundians as survived became Roman subjects in Savoy (P.A.).

Further, when the Huns invaded Gaul in 451, the Burgundians fought as Roman forces under Aetius, opposing Attila the Hun and his vassal Theodemar, father of Theoderic the Great (the epical Dietmar, father of Dietrich von Bern). Some Burgundians fought on the side of Attila.

⁸ Referred to following as P.T., P.A., I., O., and S.

Gunthar's temporary power was memorable. His country ranks high, directly after the Huns and Goths (cf. Widsith). He dared make and unmake Roman Emperors. But his great power met equally striking ruin; the Burgundians, masters of the Romans, became their servants. This humiliation lasted for decades, enough to make it perpetual in epic tradition. We see its presence under various forms.

a. Helm-Gunnar's Fight Against Agnar. (Edda, Sigrdrifumal and Helreið Brynhildar.)

When Sigurd had awaked the Valkyrie Sigrdrifa, she told him her story. There had been a fight between the old and valiant king Helm-Gunnar of Got-thiod and the young Agnar, Auda's brother. Odin had ordered Sigrdrifa to bestow the victory upon Gunnar; but, preferring the younger man, who had no other help, she killed Gunnar. In punishment Odin stung her with a magic thorn, causing her to sleep for ages, and prophesied that she would never be victorious and must suffer an enforced marriage.

This Sigurd is Sigbert II who was killed in 575. If we assume that a magic sleep must last about a century, the action would be dated about the middle of the 5th Century, the actual time of Gunthar's ruin.

Helm-Gunnar is the first epical king named Gunnar (Gunthar); he rules a Gothic country, and is of advanced age. Everything fits in to identify him with the historical Gunthar, also the first of his name, ruling a Gothic country, and obviously old in 436, as he must have been in his prime in 410 when he tried to dethrone the Roman Emperor.

Agnar evidently reflects Aetius (Agetius). As "Auda's brother" he belongs to the Audlings, the dynasty of Kiar of Valland (*Frà Fornthjots etmønnum*) who was the Kaisar or Emperor of the Welsh (Romans). Agnar is young, as Aetius must have been in 436; for he did not reach his full fame until 451 when he defeated Attia.

Here then is a famous Gothonic king defeated by a gallant young Roman, a situation in which the Gothonic spectator hesitates between his national instinct and his respect for the victorious strength of the Roman. The poetical expression of

this dilemma is the situation of Odin *versus* the disobedient Valkyrie; he being the embodiment of Gothonic national spirit, while the Valkyrie voices the poet's personal sympathy.

As a whole, the tale of Helm-Gunnar is a closed episode, and its connection with the Nibelungen Legend is merely superficial.

b. Bavarian-Hungarian Legends of Gunthar's Fight with Attila; the poems Biterolf and Rosengarten.

In Bavaria and Hungary, Gunthar's struggle with the Huns was partially described without reference to the Nibelungen legend.⁹ In the *Biterolf* and *Rosengarten*, the subject is treated as a tournament in loose connection with the Nibelungen legend. Their historical background was first noted by Zinnow in 1843.¹⁰

The Hungarian Simon of Keza (c. 1280) describes the raid of Ethele (Attila). Advised by Dietrich von Bern, Attila led his Huns across the Rhine at Constanz and, near Basel, defeated Sigismund (the Burgundian Saint Sigismund died 523). Attila captured Strassburg, raided Gaul, fought against Aetius and the Gothic king Aldaric, expelled the Moors from Spain, visited Cologne, held a great parliament in Eisenach, and subjugated Frisians, Scandinavians, Prussians, and Lithuanians.

The Bavarian chronicler Thurmair (Aventinus) refers to the same legend, with the difference that the first army defeated is led by Gundaric and Sigismund, father and son. In the German text, Gundaric is Gundacker. This is the historical Gunthar, king of Burgundy, defeated by the Huns in 436. Thurmair refers to another version which identifies Gundacker's fall with the battle of Châlons, 451. Olahus, the Hungarian, says that Sigismund was defeated near Basel and Guntachar near Strassburg. This appears in a version of the Nibelungen legend. The sequence is not historical, as Gunthar died almost a century before Sigismund.

The *Biterolf* and *Rosengarten* poems describe Gunther's fight with the Huns in quite different epical surroundings, but with a common skeleton of action which is as follows:

⁹ Cf. Matthæi, *Die bairische Hunnensage* in *Zeitschrift f. D. A.*, 1902, p. 12, ff.

¹⁰ *Germania*, 1843, p. 25 ff.; cf. Matthæi, l.c., p. 14.

A female relative of Gunthar (Brynhild, Kriemhild) challenges a Goth, a vassal or ally of Attila. The Burgundians are attacked near Worms by Goths and Huns led by Rüdiger and Dietrich von Bern. According to the second poem, the battle takes place in Kriemhild's wonderful rose garden. Many are killed, but the principal heroes content themselves with a harmless tournament. Gunther and his ally Sigfrid, son of Sigmund, are defeated, but not killed. Their deaths are reserved for the standard legendary situation.

The lays, in at least two points, surpass the Nibelung poems in historical faithfulness; Gunther's defeat, while large, is not final, and the Huns are shown as auxiliaries rather than leaders. Attila's personal passivity is historical, but that appears also in the *Nibelungenlied*.

c. Gunther-Gunnar's Fight with Attila, According to the Nibelungen Legend

The German version of the conflict just mentioned makes Attila passive; the northern version makes him covetously desirous of the Nibelungen hoard. This, while not historical, accords with Attila's known character, as is illustrated by his insistence that the Emperor at Rome should deliver to him the broker Silvanus who had received some church plate saved from a Hunnic plundering, Attila's claim being that he had been thus cheated of his legal booty!

The legend started from two episodes, the fight with the Hunnic Uftahar, and the fight with the Roman governor's Hunnic troops. Later were introduced a dozen episodic battles, mostly from Hunnic cycles or directly from the tragedies of the Erules in 512, the Thuringians in 530, the Burgundians, 532, the East Goths, 553; the Bulgares, 630; the Merovingian Franks, 630. No important additions are made in these episodes to the character of Gunther. He remains simply the ideal knight. The most impressive scene is the Eddic account of his death, where, with the trembling heart of the coward Hialle and the brave heart of Högne before him, Gunthar defies Atle and proudly meets his death.

In really individual features, Gunther is surpassed by his fellow, Hagen-Högne. The latter character is suggested as a reflection from the Roman Aetius (Agetius) who commanded

the Burgundians against Attila in 451, and who, with the epical Hagen was sent as hostage to Attila. As a demonic type, Aetius' only rival in the following centuries is Chilperic, slayer of Sigbert II. The Hagen of the Nibelungen Act I certainly reflects this latter; the relation between Aetius and the Hagen of Act II is too broad to be entered into here.

3. THE CYCLE OF THE HUNNIC KING ATTILA

As the Burgundian Gunther declined, Attila was arising until in time he eclipsed the Gothic Ermanric as a center of epical cycles. This predominance may be illustrated by various facts. Ermanric had three recognized epical followers, Sunilda, Sarv, and Hammi. Gunther had but one, Aetius (Hagen). Attila, however, had at least a dozen; his father Mund-jiuk (Atle's father Id-mund in the *Helgakviða Hjörvardssonar*; his brother Bleda; his wives Kerka and Hildico; two sons; officials (H)onegesios and Esla (epical Hungar and Else); a messenger, Vigilia (Vinge); a vassal, Theodmer in the third *Godrunarkviða*; perhaps still the hostage Aetius-Hagen.

There is an important distinction also in the descriptive details of psychology and civilization. Ermanric is the rough type of cruel tyrant; Gunther is the ideal knight; Attila has certain individual features of wider variety. The northern legends stress his avarice and his polygamy. He is noted for his love of children, and his religious tolerance; the musicians at his court are widely mentioned in legend as in history. The horn-bows of the Huns are remembered in the northern and German legends, and the stony shields mentioned in the *Hildebrandslied* mark the low level of Hunnic civilization.

In episodes, too, Attila leads. Ermanric and Gunther have but two or three each; the Hunnic correspondents are legion. Both of Gunthar's episodes introduce Huns, and half the additional ones in the later stages of the legend are equally Hunnic.¹¹

The culmination of Hunnic supremacy lasted a few decades only, and consequently offered no great opportunity for chronological disturbance.

¹¹ Cf. Matthæi, l. c. for a rich collection of Hunnic elements in German legends.

Attila's wooing has given rise to epical continuations. In 447 he proposed to Honoria, a Roman princess, who had been seduced by her guardian and later placed in custody. Marcellinus Comes reports a probably unjustified rumor that she tried to stir up Attila against her own country. According to Priscus, Attila threatened war unless she and half the Empire were given him. The epical continuation of this tale will be dealt with later.

His death, too, offered a germ for epical growth, in this case a gradual transition from history to legend. Priscus, a contemporary of his, reports that in 454 Attila enlarged his harem with a woman (H)ildico, became drunk at the wedding feast, and in the morning was found dead from a hemorrhage, beside his bride. In the 6th Century, Marcellinus refers to this tale, but believes that a woman stabbed Attila during the night. The *Chronicon Alexandrinum* repeats Priscus' tale, but adds that the concubine was suspected of the murder. Saxo, in the 9th Century and the *Quedlinburg Annals*, 11th Century, say that Attila was murdered by a woman whose father he had slain. The Eddic *Atlakviða* describes how Atle killed the brothers of his wife Gudrun; and, drunken, was slain by Gudrun, who then burned the palace with its inhabitants. These all are not stages of the same legend, but exhibit the tendency to replace death by hemorrhage by murder at a woman's hand. Only in the German legend is the bride innocent, and even there she becomes a means of explaining the ruin of the Burgundians.

Attila's two historical wives have been variously confused. His wooing of Kerka in the *Thidrekssaga* is transferred to Hildico in the *Nibelungenlied*. The names also become amalgamated into Herka (Erka), Helche (should be *Hilche) and perhaps Kriemhild. "Kriem" means nothing in Gothonic, but points toward Krêka (Kerka) i.e., "the Greek woman." *Krek-hild (High German *Kriechild) was confused with Grimhild, as Attila's wife is called in an Austrian legend (Lazius) and resulted in the *Nibelungenlied* Kriemhild or the Grimhild of some Low German and Danish ballads.¹²

The elements above mentioned are generally regarded as historical. It remains to suggest a historical equation perhaps startling.

¹² Cf., however, Heussler's objections, *Zeitschrift f. D. A.*, LII, p. 105 ff. (no. 12).

The Greek ambassador Priscus has described his journey to Attila's court in 446. The general importance of his brilliant fragments has long been recognized; our question is whether the connection between history and legend is not more direct than hitherto understood.

The overture of the Nibelung Act II is a difficult journey through the Danubian regions to the court of Attila. Solitary though the theme is in epical literature, it has historical correspondence in the report of Priscus. In some detail the likenesses are as follows:

When the travelers departed, their countryman Romulus remained at home, like the cautious cook of the Burgundians, Rumolt. Near the Danube, they met an ill omen; the valleys were full of skeletons. Compare the Danube water-nymph who prophecies the ruin of the Burgundians to Hagen. The ferry was not for ordinary passengers, but for the use of a hostile army; correspondingly in the *Nibelungenlied*. In the river region, the travelers suffered storm; a similar adventure is repeated constantly in the Nibelung legends, both German and Northern. Hostile frontier guards caused numerous hindrances as in the *Nibelungenlied*. Later Esla took part in the hostilities against the Romans, as in the *Nibelungenlied* there is a hostile frontier guard, Else. Vigila, the messenger, who played into Attila's hands, first advised a continuance of the journey, then changed his mind, and was opposed by Priscus. So the messenger Vinge in the *Edda* persuades the Burgundians to accept Attila's invitation, and later warns them, but is silenced by Högne. The travelers were kindly received by Bleda's widow and were told the legend of the Gothic hero Vidigoia who had succumbed to the Sarmatians near the river Theiss. In the *Nibelungenlied*, the Burgundians were kindly received in Pöchlarn by Margrave Rüdiger and his wife. A relative of his had been killed by the hero Witege (Vidigoia) and it is reported that later the widow was loved by Bloedlin (Bleda). Attila received the travelers unkindly, claiming angrily the delivery of a treasure which was beset with blood-guiltiness, as in the Northern legend. In the German legend, the claim is laid by Kriemhild. During the banquet, the guests were entertained by musicians and other players, as in the *Nibelungenlied*. All enjoyed it except Attila. "He sat

motionless without betraying any interest. Neither in words nor in gestures he showed any gaiety, except when his youngest son, Ernac, entered and approached him; then he pinched the boy's cheeks, regarding him tenderly. Wondering why Attila neglected his other sons and paid attention only to this one, I asked my neighbor at table, a barbarian who knew Latin. He told me the soothsayers had prophesied to Attila that his kindred would decay, but be again uplifted through this son. My neighbor enjoined on me to be silent about his communication."

The prophecy was fulfilled in 453 when the subjugated Gothic tribes revolted against Attila's sons, killing the oldest of them, Ernac, and overthrowing the Hunnic Empire. Both the prophecy and the fulfillment reappear in the *Nibelungenlied*, there compressed into one scene, that of the killing of Ortlieb, Attila's favorite son, by Hagen, and the general fight which followed.

The prophecy, at least, must belong to the roots of the legend. But the preceding events correspond so clearly that it seems likely that Priscus had told the adventures of his travels to people he met at Attila's court, e.g., the Roman ambassador, and as he was an ingenious narrator, his report may have been remembered and in time told in poetry. The problem is at any rate too interesting to pass unnoticed.

4. LEGENDS OF THE ERULIAN KING HRODWULF AND THE GOTHIC KING THEODERIC THE GREAT

The following episodes, Erulian and Gothic, are in themselves dramatic, but do not belong in the main action of the *Nibelungen* legend.

The Erules, a Scandinavian tribe which finally reached Austria, as subject of Attila fought under their Gothic king Theodmer, father of Theodoric, against Aetius and the Burgundians in Gaul, 451. With the fall of the Hunnic Empire, they became allies of the East Goths, and the Goth Theodoric the Great in Italy proclaimed the Erulian king Hrodwulf his "son by adoption of arms." His minister Cassiodorus in his collection *Varia* reproduces the letter of creation. Theodoric, however, could not save the Erules from defeat by the Lango-

bards in 512. Paul Warnefrid's *Langobardian Chronicle* depicts poetically the ruin and death of King Hrodwulf.

The Erulian Hrodwulf, a Dane in Beowulf, and a contemporary Norwegian king mentioned by Jordanis, are the first known persons of the name.¹³

The first two became epical heroes, and as their name seems to have been exclusively Scandinavian till the 6th Century, all German Rudolfs must be regarded as named for the Erulian.

A Rodolf, margrave of Bakalar in Austria appears as a faithful knight of Attila in the *Thidrekssaga*. As he is earlier than any namesake, he must be identified with the fairly contemporary Erulian king of history. The later version of the *Thidrekssaga* calls him Rodingeir of Bakalar, except in one place, and this latter is identical with Rüdiger of Bechelaren in the *Nibelungenlied*.¹⁴

The change of Rodolf to Rodingeir to Rüdiger is explained by several factors.¹⁵ An essential reason was the existence of an Austrian Count Rüdiger (circ. 980) who influenced the name of the Erulian hero. The influence seems more likely when we remember that Rüdiger's three contemporaries, Pilgrim, Gero and Eckewart were introduced into the drama. We may suggest, too, that Rüdiger was assimilated with Attlia's minister mentioned by Priscus, (H)onegesius, i. e., the Hungar of *Widsith* and of Saxo's *Danish History*; for the epical Rüdiger and the historical Onegesius both appear as kind hosts to foreigners during the perilous trip through the Danubian regions to Attila's Court.

Apart from this, Rüdiger has but one prominent characteristic, his firm alliance with Dietrich von Bern. This loyalty, Matthei points out, takes the place of the usual epical accompaniment of father, brother, or son. The situation reflects exactly the alliance of Hrodwulf the Erulian with Theodoric the Great.

At the news of Rüdiger's death, Dietrich was seized with wild despair. His men flung themselves furiously upon the

¹³ Cf. Schönfeld, *Wörterbuch der altgermanischen Personen- und Völkernamen*.

¹⁴ Cf. Boer, *Zeitschrift f. d. Phil.*, XXV, p. 443; Matthei, *Zeitschrift f. D. Alt.* XLIII, p. 305, ff.; H. Bertelsen in his edition of *Þidrikssaga af Bern*, p. 410.

¹⁵ Matthei, l. c., p. 316.

slayers, but, with the exception of the old Hildebrand, were themselves killed. Dietrich's despair expresses Theodoric's feeling as his policy was menaced by the defeats of his allies, as of Hrodwulf in 512. The flight of Dietrich's men reflects the ruin of the Gothic power after Theodoric's death, with the fatal defeat by the Byzantines, 535-553.

5. MEROVINGIAN LEGEND A. THE HEATHEN KING HLODWIG AND HIS BRIDE CHRODHILD

After Attila's death and the defeat of the Huns, two contemporary Gothic conquerors founded empires upon the ruins of Rome; one the Gothic Theodoric the Great, of the Amalungian dynasty, in Italy; the other the Franconian Chlodwig, founder of the state of France, a Merovingian. Both empires became famous in legends, offering the next epical culminations after Attila. Theodoric, as Dietrich von Bern, soon eclipsed Ermanric and Attila, but his brilliance was meteoric, and at length he occupies only a subordinate place in the Nibelungen legend, along with his faithful friend the Erulian Hrodwulf.

We have noted above the incident of Attila and the Christian princess Honoria in 447, the first case of a heathen king wooing a Christian maiden. Attila's fame must have added to the sensation the event caused. Previous to his time, the female element had played no rôle worth mention in Gothic literature. But Attila's love story lacked one thing for literary appeal; he did not win the lady. As legend could not allow a hero of his rank to go without a bride, one had to be borrowed from another hero. For this purpose, Chlodwig the Merovingian came in handily. He was, next to Attila, the most important heathen conqueror who wooed an imprisoned Christian princess, and had the further advantages of having been successful in his suit.

The fusion, according to epical laws, was a matter of course. Attila, as the more famous hero, kept his name; Chlodwig supplied the story, and then disappeared from legend, lingering only in some Eddic poems in the shadowy references to "Chlodwig's halls." Such a disappearance is explained only by the assumption that he has been swallowed up by a more famous figure.

The observation of this fusion is due to Sophus Bugge and Carl Voretzsch, who furnish exact particulars.¹⁶ We can but point out some main features.

Gregory of Tours gives nearly the pure history. The Burgundian King Gundbad, he says, had slain his own brother, Chilperic, and kept his two daughters Chrona and Chrodhild in custody. Hearing of Chrodhild's beauty, Chlodwig, in 493, proposed. Gundbad dared not refuse. As queen, Chrodhild converted her husband and stirred up her sons to revenge her on her Burgundian kindred. She was successful (523-532), Godomar succumbing in 532.

The same tale, epically depicted, is seen in *Fredegar's Chronicle* (7th Century), in the Neustrian *Liber Historiae* (8th Century), and in *Aimoin's Chronicle*. The new version appears then in Attila's wooing of Erka in the *Thidrekssaga* and of Kriemhild in the *Nibelungenlied*. The following summary appears in each detail both in one of the half-historical chronicles, and in one of the legends.

A mighty heathen king heard of a beautiful Christian princess (Chrodhild) whose guardian, the Burgundian king (Guntar), had killed a relation of hers and imprisoned her and her sister. The heathen king sent messengers to propose, but they were denied sight of her. One of the messengers, in disguise, succeeded in reaching her, his fellows being hidden in a wood. She feared to marry a heathen, but was persuaded in the hope of converting him. She confirmed the promise by a ring given to the messenger, and fled with him. The Burgundian king had a counsellor who opposed the match strongly. She was pursued, and her treasures were captured, though she escaped and sent back forces to harry the Burgundian lands. After the wedding she continued to plan revenge, and finally caused the ruin of Burgundy. In the Nibelungen story, one of the ruined Burgundian princes is Gernot who takes the place of the Eddic Gottormr (Godomar) the historical Burgundian king who fell in 532.

The identity of the love stories of Attila and Chlodwig cannot be doubted, as they are the first Gothic specimens of their kind both in legend and history, and the action in both

¹⁶ *Studier over de nordiske Gude-og Hellesagns Opindelse*, II, p. 260, ff.; and *Zeitschrift f. D. A.*, 1909, p. 50, ff.

cases is of the 5th Century. Through the medium of Chlodwig, then the Burgundian-Hunnic drama has been enriched with one of its most dramatic figures, the Burgundian princess who ruins her own relations with the aid of a heathen husband.

Leaving Act II of the drama, we turn to the overture and Act I.

5. THE MEROVINGIAN LEGEND B "THE KINDRED OF WOLVES" VS. "THE KINDRED OF DOGS"

Fredegar (chapter 9) reports the mythical origin of the Merovingian dynasty. The wife of Chlodio, Franconian king, was impregnated by a bull-like beast which arose from the sea. Her son was Meroweck, who gave his name to the dynasty.

We regard Meroweck as an eponymous figure. In the grave of his reputed son Childeric a golden bull's head was found, in 1653, belonging to a royal diadem.¹⁷ It shows the authenticity of the bull myth. But other animals appear in Merovingian dynastic tradition.

Fredegar says that the Franks dethroned their king because of his sexual debauchery. The Thoringian king Basin in Holland received him kindly, and Childeric, in true Merovingian style, rewarded him by seducing and carrying off his wife Basina. Soon after, she dreamed she saw the palace yard filled with lions, tigers and other large carnivora; then with wolves and similar beasts; then with dogs and other smaller animals which bit and tore each other. The dream was explained as a prophecy of the fates of the Merovings. The problem is to discover it in legends outside of France.

The lions obviously allude to Childeric's son, Chlodwig. But as he was replaced in the legend by Attila, it is likely that this replacement explains the disappearance of the symbol of the lions. The wolves, as it appears from German legends, refer to king Theodoric of Austrasia, illegitimate son of Chlodwig, and Theodoric's illegitimate son Theodbert, the last of the line. These last two kings gained fame through their defeat of the Viking Huggleik (circ. 513), and increased it by subjugating the Thuringian king Irminfrid (530), the Irnfrido of the *Nibelungenlied*. The wolf symbol reappears in history in

¹⁷ Cf. Müllenhoff in *Zeitschrift f. D. A.*, 1848, p. 434.

connection with Austrasia, and, strangely enough, applied to kings who repeat the names Theodoric and Theodbert. They were grandsons of the Austrasian king Sigbert, and when, in 613 they were engaged in fratricidal strife, Bishop Lesio of Mayence told Theodoric the parable of the old wolf who said to his children "Look as far as your eyes reach, you have no friend except your own kindred."¹⁸ The parable probably was meant to contrast the dissention of that generation as compared with the harmony of the older generation of "wolves."

The German legend remembers the wolf symbol as distinctly connected with the older Theodoric and Theodbert, here called Hug-Dietrich and Wolf-Dietrich. Their descendents are the Wülfings. Wolf-Dietrich, an illegitimate son like his historical model, abandoned as an infant in a wood, is found by a she-wolf and raised with her offspring. The Wülfings' struggle against a kindred line of legitimate birth reflects the historical situation of Theodoric and his step-brothers. Though the Wülfings in German tradition have no connection with the Nibelungen legend, such connection is furnished by the *Edda*. The northern Ylfings and the Völsungs appear as descendants of the Nibelungen hero Sigmund (i. e. the Burgundian king Saint Sigismund, father-in-law of Theodoric the Austrasian). As step-father of Wolf-Dietrich's mother, Sigmund might be called the ancestor of the epical Wülfings, Sophus Bugge indicates further Merovingian records in the legends of the Ylfings.¹⁹

The third animal symbol, the dogs, indicates Chlodwig's legitimate younger sons who carried on the dynasty to its ends in the 8th Century. The names of this line often repeat initial CH (English H) as in their ancestors; so Chlodio, Chilperic, Chlodwig; and Chlodmer, Charbert, Chlodwig; the epical name of "Hounds," certainly reflects this. The Hounds fight the Wolves, and also each other, this last echoing the quarreling curs in the legend of Childeric and Basina.

In the *Edda*, they appear as Hundings, enemies of the Ylfings. The Hunding Hervard is Chlodwig's son Charbert; Lyngve, the younger Merovingian Chlodwig (Louis). The

¹⁸ Cf. G. Kurth, *Histoire poétique des Mérovingiens*, p. 412.

¹⁹ *Studier over de nord. Gude-og Heltesagns Opindelse*, II, p. 79, ff. E. g., Hjörvard Ylfing of the Ynglingsaga is identified with Theodoric, the Hug-Dietrich of the German legend.

picture is as unflattering as in Basina's dream. In the *Völ-sungakviða*, Hunding's conqueror, Helga Sigmundsson receives him scornfully in Valhall setting him the most menial tasks.

Some few of the "Hounds" scarcely deserve the dynastic reputation. Sigbert II was an exception to Merovingian debauchery and meanness. The legend therefore took him from the family of "Hounds," attributed him to a separate Völsung family, and linked him superficially to the older favorite group, the "Wolves." Sigmund, as ancestor of both Ylfings and Völsungs was the means of connection.

The chief action of the Ylfing legend is centered about Saint Sigismund. As he was a Burgundian, his legend would seem to belong to his own country rather than to the Merovingians. But as his son-in-law and conqueror were both Merovingian, his fate was recorded in their cycles, and passed from them to Scandinavia as an Ylfing legend.

The struggle of Sigmund and his son Sinfjötle with Siggeir seems to contain some myth, for Bugge finds Sinfjötle in the northern ballads of the mythical Sven Felding. The historical thread appears in Sinfjötle's death in the *Edda*. The narrative which follows is shared by Gregory III (ch. 5), there related of Sigismund and his son Sigeric.

Sigeric, proud and gallant, hated and was hated by his stepmother, who caused him to be murdered without objection from his father. Sigismund immediately repented and embraced his dead son. An old man remarked that such care for the dead son was superfluous.

This is the first cruel stepmother tale in Gothonic history and legend. The name Sigismund appears in both versions; it is known in history at the beginning of the Christian era, but not again for five centuries. The wretched Saint Sigismund is the next of the name, and his portrait corresponds so exactly to that of the Eddic Sigmund that there can be no doubt they are identical. The parallel goes further; Sigismund was conquered and slain by Chlodwig's son Chlodmer in 523, shortly before the birth of Sigbert II; the epical Sigmund was slain by Hunding's sons shortly before the birth of Sigurd.

In the legend, Helga Sigmundsson accomplishes the revenge, reflecting the historical Childbert, son of Sigbert II, perhaps.

If so, the episode does not belong in the true Ylfing cycle. This will be dealt with later.

7. MEROVINGIAN LEGEND C: THE 'WERGELD' OF THE GOTHs;
ALBERICH'S DEFEAT; THE AVARICE OF FARRO AND RAGNHAR;
AMALRIC'S FLIGHT; THE MURDER OF SIGBERT I;
GODOMAR THE BURGUNDIAN AS SLAYER
OF A FRANCONIAN
PRINCE

Alberich, the dwarf, who in the *Nibelungenlied* attempts to defend the hoard against the Franconian Sigfrid, is named obviously from the ancient Celtic god, Mars Albiorix, worshipped in Gaul. He represents also the historical Gothic king Alaric who was conquered in 507 and lost his Gallic territory and huge treasure to Chlodwig's Franks.²⁰

The *Edda* does not know Alaric's name, but contains another mythical legend which points toward his time.

Fredegar says that Alaric was convicted of attempts on Chlodwig's life. The Goths were forced to pay as much gold as would cover a Franconian horseman sitting upright on his horse. When the top of his head was covered, still the tip of his lance projected, and this, too, the Goths were forced to cover.

In 538, the Goths were obliged to pay another large fine to the Franks; according to Gregory, 50,000 ducats. This was in payment for the murder of queen 'Amalasuintha, of the Franconian dynasty, by King Athalric of Italy. Soon after, the Franconian kings, Chlodwig's two sons, murdered the sons of their late brother Chlodmer.

The Eddic correspondence appears in the *Reginsmal*. This is the well known story of the killing of Hreidmar's son Ottar, and the wergeld of the otter's skin filled and covered with gold. To cover the last whisker, Loke was forced to give up a ring, with which went his curse upon any owner of the hoard. Hreidmar and his sons soon fell out over the division of the hoard and killed each other.

Jacob Grimm²¹ has shown correspondences to the "wergeld" in real life. There is an essential difference, however. In the

²⁰ Cf. Giesebrecht in von der Hagen's *Germania*, 1837, p. 212.

²¹ *Deutsche Rechtsaltertümer*, p. 668.

Merovingian and Eddic type, the object to be covered is placed head upwards, and a projecting extremity is covered separately. Grimm's other examples are of the type in which the animal is hanged head down, and covered with grains.²² The contrast is important, as the Eddic-Merovingian type is individual, while the other type is frequent from England and Germany to Arabia. The Merovingian story is solitary in so-called history; its Eddic correspondence is solitary in mythical and epical literature. The time, too, coincides very nearly; the Merovingian incident in 507, and the Eddic about the time of the birth of Sigurd (Sigbert II, born 530). The "Goths" of the Merovingian tale have become "Gods" in the *Edda*. The dead Chlodmer whose sons are killed by their uncles soon after the payment of the Gothic fine, seems to reflect Hreidmar, whose sons kill him and each other after the "wergeld" of the gods. Such parallels are scarcely accidental.

After Alaric's ruin, Merovingian history continues with further treachery and plunderings.²³ The figure of Chlodwig's kinsman, Ragnhar, king of Cambrai, emerges as noted for this treachery and lust, equalled only by his counsellor Farro. He, with his brothers and Farro, was overcome and plundered by Chlodwig. A study of this situation in detail would indicate a close parallel between it and the Eddic situation after the "wergeld" episode, the avarice of Chlodwig, Rhagnar and Farro being echoed in Hreidmar's sons, Ottar, Regin and Fafne. Of Ottar it has been said that "he ate with closed eyes, because he could not bear to see his food dwindle."

Two more episodes from the last years of Chlodwig are traceable in the legend.²⁴

The Gothic king Amalric was ejected from Gaul by Chlodwig in 507. This is the knight Amelrich, who according to the *Nibelungenlied* (str. 1548, Bartsch) had been driven out by his enemies. He is mentioned in Act II, but the event is of the time of Act I, i. e., about the time of Chlodwig.

Sigbert I, king of Rhenish Franconia was murdered by his own son Chlodric at the instigation of Chlodwig, in 509, four-

²² Six times a dog (Germany, Arabic), once a cat (Wales), once a swan (England). A northern variety is an ox-hide filled with meal.

²³ Gregory, I, c. 42.

²⁴ Gregory, II, c. 37 and c. 40.

teen years before the death of Sigismund. The names and the details, nearly complete, reappear in the *Nibelungenlied*. Accidental parallelism is here impossible. It is an exact description.

Finally we may add an episode from the years just after Chlodwig's death.²⁵

Chlodmer the Franconian was killed in 523 by the Burgundian Godomar. In the *Edda*, Gottormr (Burgundian) kills the Franconian Sigurd. As Chlodmer was the uncle of Sigbert II (Sigurd) the historical situation is preserved, though the only name kept is that of the slayer.

The Merovingian saga from first to last is a chain of adultery, treachery, plunder, and murder of kinsmen. Especially prominent in all this was Chlodwig. When he was replaced by Attila, no nucleus remained for the heritage which the Nibelungen legend took from the Merovingian age. But the likenesses remain in the portraits of such creatures as Ottar and Fafne.

8. MEROVINGIAN LEGEND D. SIGBERT II, BRUNHILD, AND THEIR AGE

In vain have we sought thus far for an historical person who might have grown into the Nibelungen hero, with certain marked personal qualities. Ermanric, Gunthar, Hrodwulf, Theodoric, Attila, and all the others have each some marked defect which bars him. In the days of Theodbert the Wülfing and of Sigismund, the hero appears, accompanied by a heroine of equal rank.

These persons are king Sigbert II who died in 575, and his queen Brunhild, who survived until 613. They were contemporaries of Gregory of Tours, who describes their lives with details sufficient to recognize clearly in them the two figures in which the Nibelung drama culminates. We begin with a general survey of persons and setting.²⁶

Sigbert was king of Austrasia, i. e., northern France extending beyond the Rhine. He is the epical Sigurd Fafnesbane, alias Sigfrid of Rhenish Franconia. He married Brunhild of the Baldung dynasty, daughter of king Athanagild in Ispania (Spain). She is Brynhild the Budlung, the sister of Atla living

²⁵ Gregory, III, c. 6.

²⁶ Cf. our more detailed synopsis in *Arkiv f. nord. filologi*, 1907, p. 16.

in Isenland. In history as in legend, she died as regent of Burgundy, living at Worms. Her enemies charged her with Sigbert's death. Gunthram, king of Burgundy, married Bobila and became adoptive father of Brunhild's children. He is the epical Gunnar-Gunthar, husband of Brynhild. In his ancestors and in Brynhild's descendants, the name Sigbert occurs, and their son is Sigfrid. Sigbert's death was caused by Gunthram's brother Chilperic, king of Neustria, with the capital Tournay (Flemish Doornik) and his accomplice, the rival of Sigbert's queen. In the *Nibelungenlied* it is due to Hagen-Högne, kinsman of Gunnar, the Hagen of Tronege (Troneck). Four of Chilperic's descendants were named Dagbert, one of them the last prominent Merovingian (Hagen's brother Dankwart; in the northern introductory legend, Högne's son Dag) Chilperic's family is aided against Sigbert's by Arnulf of Metz (cf. Hagen's nephew Ortwin of Metz). Sigbert, as was Sigfrid in the *Nibelungenlied*, was attacked by Danes and Saxons allied; and fought against the "Hagan" ("Chakan"—chieftain) of the Avars, who is the second model for Hagen.

Sigbert is a real hero in history. According to Dahn's "*Urgeschichte der germanischen und romanischen Völker*," he is the greatest Merovingian statesman after Chlodwig. His victory over the Danes and Saxons made him famous. He was not only clever and gallant; he was noble and pure. Dahn calls him the only moral hero among the Merovings, therefore their only real hero. On the dark background of his kinsmen he appears twice glorious. His tragic fate and the epical prominence of his dynasty did the rest; he was thus uncontestably entitled to become a great epical hero, in some Gothonic legends, the highest. It is only a wonder that scholars have not been able to realize this fact. If France could build her greatest epical hero out of an obscure count Roland of Brittany, king Sigbert must be tenfold qualified for similar rank.

Brunhild, like Sigbert, had a proud and clever nature. She was bold, ambitious, revengeful, both amazon and iron-clad; but always noble, as in her pardon of the assassins sent against her by her rival. Above all was her love for her husband, though singularly enough, after his death she married a relative of the murderer. Her conflict with a rival queen

got her into misfortune, and her enemies charged her with Sigbert's death. Later French legends make her a powerful witch, and in northeastern France and Rhenish Germany numerous roads, peaks and castles bear her name.

Gunthram of Burgundy, (died 593) was weak and unwarlike. He tried in vain to reconcile the fighting queens. Chilperic of Tournay (died 584) was intriguing, clever, unscrupulous, avaricious. Inspired by his queen, equally unscrupulous, he caused the ruin of the hero and took his treasure. His younger relative Dagbert, with Arnulf of Metz, we will speak of later.

The multiplicity and contrasts of character could scarcely be reflected more faithfully than through the persons appearing in the Nibelung Act I. In the action, too, we find correspondences.

In 561 when Sigbert became king, he had trouble over boundaries and treasure. In 562, while being threatened by the Avaric "Hagan" (Chakan—chieftain) he also withstood Chilperic of Tournay. In 567 he made an inexplicable and unsuccessful attack on Gunthram of Burgundy. An attack of combined Danes and Saxons was repelled by Sigbert's general, who is praised in a poem by Venantius Fortunatus. In 572 Sigbert and Gunthram together defended Burgundy against the Saxons.

Sigbert desired to marry a princess, and in 566 wooed and wed Brunhild of Ispania. In 567 her sister was wedded to one of the Franconian kings, but was soon repudiated and killed, her place being taken by a rival who then came into conflict with Brunhild. The consequence was the murder of Sigbert about ten years after his wedding, by Chilperic. Brunhild's enemies accused her. Sigbert's treasure was taken by his murderer, but his son was saved by a faithful guardian. Brunhild married a relative of the murderer, but did not leave her late husband's family. Gunthram became the foster father of her children and she herself died at Worms where she had lived as regent of Burgundy. Chilperic died in 584, and Brunhild was blamed for his death, as she was known to have plotted revenge. Three years later, Gunthram effected a temporary reconciliation between the hostile queens. In 630, Dagbert, Chilperic's younger relative defeated an army of "Huns," but in the same year was totally defeated by the heathen

barbarians in eastern Germany. He was succeeded by another Sigbert.

The *Nibelungenlied* has these events in nearly the same sequence, remembering even the ten years between the hero's wedding and death, and the three years between the death of Brunhild's rival's husband and the agreement effected by Gunthram.

It seems inconceivable that scholars have been able to deny the historical character of the Nibelung Sigfrid and Brynhild. No parallel between history and legend is more rich and striking.

It is unique that one situation contains all the persons: Sigbert, Brunhild, Gunthram of Burgundy, Hagan, Hagen of Tournay; and the legend Sigfrid, Brynhild, Gunthar of Burgundy, Hagen of Tronege.

It is unique that a European queen, also regent of Burgundy and residing at Worms, has the name Brynhild-Brunhild, as she is the first historical person of that name, and Worms was not known as a residence town before 613 when she stayed there.²⁷

It is unique that Danes and Saxons are spoken of as making a combined attack on the Franks; Sigbert is the only king who repelled such an attack.

It is unique, before the time of Mary and Elisabeth, that Europe witnesses a conflict between queens such as that between Brunhild and her rival.

Certainly the developing legend has changed considerably, especially in the relations of the hero to his queen and his murderer, yet the alterations contain nothing abnormal from the epical point of view. Much is explained if we remember that the descendants of Sigfrid's murderer finally crushed Brunhild's party and caluminated her memory infamously.

The northern legend takes the part of the victorious faction almost entirely, but confuses historical fact at times, and has the intriguing dowager-queen Grimhild, who seems to reflect the intriguing Burgundian princess Chrodhild. Gottormr, younger brother to Gunnar, is made the murderer; he is Godomar who killed Sigbert's uncle in 523.

²⁷ Cf. Abeling, *Das Nibelungenlied*, p. 207.

The Low German version found also in Denmark, keeps Hagen as the murderer, but otherwise reverses the situation as follows:

Nibelungenlied

Gunther complains that his wife Brynhild is reluctant. At night she ties him to a beam. Sigfrid secretly takes his place and tames Brynhild. Gunther repays evil for good.

Hveenske Krønikke (Danish)

Sigfrid complains that his wife Gremhild is reluctant. At night she ties him to a beam. Hogen secretly takes his place and tames Gremhild. Sigfrid meanwhile lies in Hogen's bed, and repays evil for good by seducing Hogen's wife, Gluna.

Here it can be seen that Brynhild has become Kriemhild; Gunther is Sigfrid; and Sigfrid, Hagen.

The High German legend remembers Hagen as a murderer. The *Nibelungenlied* lessens his crime, and Brynhild is denounced as the murderer, though not so violently as in the "*Helreið Brynhildar*."

The High German *Sigfridslied* partially resembles the *Hveenske Krønikke*. Brynhild's name has disappeared; Sigfrid's wife Kriemhild represents her. The identity is indicated from the episode wherein Sigfrid wins the dragon hoard and the imprisoned princess. His wife has no part in his death. The plot has exclusively political motives, and is due to Hagen and his brothers.

This synopsis shows a scale gradually leading from the calumnies of a victorious faction to an almost historic representation. The legends differ more from each other than the *Sigfridslied* differs from history.

The marriage plot demands more detailed investigation. The most obvious epical changes are the divorce of Sigbert and Brunhild and of Chilperic and Fredegund, and the making of Brynhild the wife of Gunthram. The characters of the intriguing couple are also changed.

Most radical is the divorce of Brunhild and Sigbert in the *Nibelungenlied*, where there is no trace of their connection, merely a mention of their earlier acquaintance.

The northern version has them betrothed; the *Volsungasaga* mentions a daughter of theirs; and the hero marvelously delivers the maiden and marries her in the Eddic *Sigrdrífumál*,

the *Hveenske Krønike* and the *Sigfridslied*. In explanation of such changes of historical truth, we may indicate several reasons.

1. The official calumnies against Brunhild, which in repetitions of the story caused a luckless marriage to be replaced with a divorce.

2. Brunhild's marriage to a son of her husband's murderer. Far from forgetting Sigbert, she so influenced her second husband that he abandoned his family, and was hounded to death by his parents. But gossips would naturally be startled by her marriage, and suggest some dark secret behind her life with Sigbert.

3. Some confusions of names and qualities. Brunhild died as regent of Burgundy. Gunthram, foster father of her children, had a wife whose pet name Bobila might in time be mistaken as a similarly familiar name for Brunhild.

4. The causal nexus between the marriages of rival couples. Chilperic, following Sigbert's example, had married Brunhild's sister Gailasvintha or Galsvintha. He soon killed her and married Fredegund, whose conflict with Brunhild led to Sigbert's murder. This situation, the first of its sort in Gothonic history, occupies a similarly isolated place in epical literature in the interdependent wooings of Sigfrid-Sigurd and Gunther-Gunnar. Later action in the episode is told differently in the legend; the murderer has been more or less cleared, and Fredegund has lost her name, apart from the syllable "gunth" which reappears in the northern name of Gu(n)drun, Sigurd's wife. But such changes cannot astonish us when we remember that the murderer and his accomplice belonged to the victorious faction, and their point of view influenced the traditions in calumnies against the conquered. Moreover, the defeated faction, fearing the victors, dared not mention them by their true names. The mixture of entire lie and disguised truth resulted in the mixture in the legends.

A germ of the confusion may be seen in the double wooing. The *Nibelungenlied* reflects it in Sigfrid's wooing of Brynhild for Gunther, his future murderer Hagen accompanying him on the courting expedition. In the course of time

the historically interdependent wooings could not easily be distinguished, and a fusion of Sigbert and Chilperic came about. We may assume the following primary development from history toward legend:

HISTORY	ASSUMABLE FIRST FORM OF CALUMNY
Sigbert proposes to Brunhild.	Sigbert proposes to Brunhild.
Chilperic proposes to Brunhild's sister and repudiates her, later marrying Frede-Gund.	Chilperic proposes to Brunhild's sister. Sigbert repudiates Brunhild, later marrying Gund(run).
Brunhild and her husband plan revenge.	Brunhild and her new lover plan revenge.
Chilperic murders Sigbert	Chilperic kills Sigbert

Whether this form of the intermediate stage be correct or not, it is true that the fusion of Sigfrid and his murderer appears in the *Hveenske Krønike*, as we have seen.

In the *Nibelungenlied* the fusion is not so evident at first sight, but in reality is more extensive. It here appears after Sigfrid's death. In 613 the victorious faction had accused Brunhild of the death of both Sigbert and Chilperic. The legend amalgamates her "victims" with this resulting parallel between history and legend:

GREGORY OF TOURS	NIBELUNGENLIED
When Chilperic had been murdered, his wife carried him into the cathedral, and provisionally dwelt there (VII, ch. 4).	When Sigfrid had been murdered, his wife carried him into the cathedral, and provisionally dwelt there (Str. 1039-1058, Bartsch)
His treasures were largely distributed among the poor. The spoils of his magnates were restored to the legal owners. (VII, ch. 8 and 19)	His treasures were largely distributed among the poor. Kriemhild's liberality frightened the murderer, who consequently later captured her treasures. (1060-1128)
Gunthram of Burgundy visited the cathedral, complaining the murder. He asked the people to spare himself. (VII, ch. 5 and 8)	Gunther of Burgundy visited the cathedral, complaining the murder. He tried to excuse the murderer. (1040)
He protected the helpless widow against Brunhild (VII, ch. 7).	Gunnar protected the helpless widow against Brynhild. (<i>Edda</i>)
He caused the widow to be moved from her asylum. (VII, ch. 19)	He caused the widow to be moved from her asylum. (1080)

For safety's sake she was shut up in a palace in Rotomagus, with her courtiers (VII, ch. 19).

She kept herself deliberately shut up in a palace in Borbetomagus (Worms) with her courtiers. (1102)

She hired assassins against Gunthram. (VII, ch. 18; VIII, ch. 19)

She planned revenge, and said not a word to Gunther. (1024, 1027, 1106)

Three years after the murder Gunthram brought about a general reconciliation. The enemies kissed each other. Gunthram praised the Lord." (IX, ch. 11)

Three and a half years after the murder Gunther brought about a general reconciliation. The enemies kissed each other. "Never a reconciliation was effected with more tears." (1108-1115)

Accidental coincidence is excluded.

It may still be remembered that Chilperic is perhaps amalgamated with several corresponding epical figures, notably the "Hagan" or chieftain of the Avars, another of Sigbert's enemies; with the Roman Aëtius or Agetius, lord of the Burgundians in Gaul, a similarly demonic character; and with Chlodric, slayer of Sigbert I.

It remains to consider the remarkable situation in the epic, wherein Sigfrid-Sigurd changes place and wife with Gunther-Gunnar or with Hagen. More surprising is it in those versions which make Sigurd assume the shape of Gunnar. It is a capital basis for those scholars who interpret the saga of Sigfrid-Sigurd as pure myth. In our opinion, the so-called "mythical situation" is simply an expression of the perplexity of narrators when they faced the fact that Version A referred to Sigbert and his group the identical actions which Version B gave to the murderer and his adherents.

As has been pointed out by Leo Jordan, the double wooing has a correspondence in the old French lay of *Girart*. This French continuation need not be derived from Germany; it may be a direct reflection from the Franconian legends of Sigbert and Chilperic. We cannot, however, enter upon that question, here.

The final result of the development is a picture astonishing in its general faithfulness to fact, and its colossal vigor. The hero Sigbert stands pure and splendid. Even his worst enemies did not succeed in blackening him, aside from solitary exceptions as the *Hveenske Krønike*. Brunhild, however, has been so stigmatized that some historians have had difficulty in discerning

her noble character. Still, no calumnies have succeeded in eclipsing that version which showed her as a grand heroine. She has remained the proud Amazon who finally mounted to the sky in mythical guise as a Valkyrie.

Here we leave the dramatic summit of the Nibelungen legend. What remains is of lesser importance and has assumed color and power only through its fusion with the old Burgundian drama.

9. MEROVINGIAN LEGEND E. DAGBERT AND SAMO

The decades between 587 and 630 offered few epical impulses. An Eddic poem reflects the horror of Brunhild's execution in 613; that is all. The postlude of the drama is furnished in an echo of the defeat in East Germany in 630 of King Dagbert who reigned from 622 to 638.

Dagbert, the last prominent Merovingian, grandson of Chilperic the murderer, ruled over Franconia and Burgundy, his family having subdued the descendants of Childbert Sigbertsson. Supported by Arnulf of Metz and Pipin, his counsellors, he tried to strengthen the failing royal power. *Fredegar* calls him a gallant warrior. At first munificent, he later turned avaricious. He had so many concubines that *Fredegar* does not trouble to enumerate them. He often broke faith; an example will be cited below.

Dag, son of Högne, nephew of Sigar, and adversary of the Ylfing hero Helge Sigmundsson appears in the northern overture to the legend. He undoubtedly reflects Dagbert, but shares no individual features of character except the tendency to breach of faith.

The German version has a more distinct, though not copious parallel, in Dankwart, marshal of Burgundy. He is a gallant warrior, not so cruel and unscrupulous as his kinsman Hagen. He is pleasing to women, according to Brunhild's maidens (str. 414, *Nibelungenlied*).

Arnulf of Metz, an ancestor of the Carolingians, held an important place in Dagbert's councils. In 613 he assisted Chlothar, Dagbert's father, in the rebellion against Sigbert's widow and the murder of his grandson Sigbert. In 627 he retired to the life of a hermit, and after his death in 641 was canonized. It is among his descendants that the name Nibelung

first appears, in the person of Pipin's grandson who wrote the so-called *Fredegar's Chronicle* from 751 to 768. A namesake belongs to the adherents of Charles the Bald, 850.²⁸

Ortwin of Metz in the *Nibelungenlied* corresponds fairly well with Arnulf. As the latter supports the descendants of Sigbert's slayer, so Ortwin follows Dankwart and Hagen. In str. 869 he claims Sigfrid's death. But just as Arnulf takes no part in Dagbert's great struggle with the eastern barbarians, so Ortwin silently disappears after str. 1184, taking no part in the great battle with the Huns. Though the names differ widely, it is of note that both are of Metz, and that the historical name of Nibelung appears first among the adversaries of Sigbert, just as the epical name Nibelung is first and mainly connected with the enemies of Sigfried-Sigurd. The parallelism is scarcely accidental.

Dagbert's conqueror, the heathen king Samo, partially recalls Attila. Though born in Christian Franconia, he ruled a heathen country, leading barbarian Slavs and Huns (Avars) against eastern Germany. His resemblance to Attila is not complete, for while Attila was a violent conqueror, Samo, according to *Fredegar*, was extremely peaceful. But the Attila of the *Nibelungenlied* has one feature in contrast to his historical model; an extreme peacefulness which accords with the historical Samo.

The characters then correspond; Dagbert of Franconia and Burgundy, Arnulf of Metz and Samo king of heathen Slavs are reflected in the *Nibelungenlied* by Marshal Dankwart of Burgundy, Ortwin of Metz, and the heathen king Attila.

The main lines of the action follow. We do not enter upon the northern version, but regard only the German, which contains the most conspicuous sequence of episodes. The history is chiefly from *Fredegar*.

Sigbert's party was opposed by Dagbert's grandfather Chilperic of Tournay, 562-584; and by Dagbert's ally, Arnulf of Metz in 613. Dagbert conquered the Saxons. Arnulf retired in 627. In 630 Dagbert received a band of fugitive Huns (Bulgares) near the Bavarian frontier, and later slaughtered most of them. At the same time he became involved in a war

²⁸ Müllenhoff, *Zeitschrift f. D. A.*, XII, p. 290, 293.

with Samo, king of heathen barbarians in East Germany. Dagbert's army was totally defeated and the Merovingian domination over Germany was broken. Dagbert's successor, Sigbert, deplored the unrevenged catastrophe.

In the legend, Sigfrid is opposed by Hagen of Tronege, Dankwart his kinsman, and Ortwin of Metz, both during his first conflict with Gunther and during the strife of the queens. Dankwart took part in the victory over the Saxons. Ortwin disappears after str. 1184, taking no part in the great Hunnic battle. This battle near the Bavarian border was caused by Dankwart killing duke Bloedlin whom Kriemhild had sent out with a band of Huns. In the battle against the Huns of Etzel, Dankwart and his whole army perished. The young surviving Burgundian king Sigfrid deplored the catastrophe.

Dagbert's defeat had wide consequences. It delivered Eastern Germany to the invading Slavs, and all traces of Gothic nationality disappeared. It is likely that such a catastrophe would be epically remembered by the beaten peoples, as the Britons remembered the fame of Artus and his struggle against the invading Anglo-Saxons. Such a legend is the episode of Dankwart in the Nibelung Cycle; but it has been swallowed up by an older and more famous episode which also tells of the defeat of a Gothonic power by invading heathen barbarians.

With the episode of Dankwart, the growth of the Nibelung Legend ceases. After the 11th Century, no new historical persons were added; only the old material was recast and other legends amalgamated. Accessions before 1200 are merely nominal figures such as Margrave Gero of Saxony, Count Rüdiger of Austria, Margrave Eckewart of Meissen, and bishop Pilgrim of Passau. The last has the best claim for admission, for the poem *Klage* says that he had the Nibelungen legend written down "with Latin letters," i.e., in Latin translation. But the presence of these four persons assists in showing that even the most subordinate persons of the legend are generally of historical origin.

Thus originated that gigantic conglomerate which we have examined in its growth from the fourth to the eleventh centuries, the ever memorable epos of our great migration age.

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